

What the Bible says

So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them. (Mark 6:12-13)

Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. (James 5:14-15)

The Church's Liturgy:

The effect of Anointing is 'healing to those in weakness and distress; [for the Lord] broke the power of evil and set us free from sin and death that we might become partakers of his glory, [be] restored in [God's] image, renewed in [God's] love, and for ever praise [God's] great and holy name.'
(Common Worship Ministry to the Sick)

Development of the Sacrament:

The healing of the sick was an important part of Jesus' ministry. He also sent his disciples out to minister in his name and to heal the sick and anoint them. From the letter of St James, we know that this was continued in the practice of Christians from the very early days of the Church, and this has been part of the life of the Church ever since. Through the Anointing of the Sick, the Church continues the healing ministry of Jesus.

What is a Sacrament?

A Sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. What Jesus did on earth he still does through his seven sacraments: Baptism, the Eucharist, Confirmation, Reconciliation (Confession), Anointing of the Sick, Marriage, and Holy Orders. Each of these sacraments enable us to have a personal encounter with Jesus our risen Lord. The sacraments are God's gifts to equip us to lead a full and holy life.



THE SACRAMENT OF ANOINTING

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What can I do?

There is often a misunderstanding that Anointing is only for those who are dying. Although a person who is dying may be anointed, the Church offers this sacrament for anyone who is struggling physically, mentally or spiritually at any stage of their life. It might be that you would like to receive anointing if you are going into hospital for treatment or an operation. The sacrament should be seen as an aid to our living. It is a sacrament that can be received at various times in our lives, and should be there when we need to feel God's love and strength.

If you would like to be anointed, then please do talk to your parish priest.

Prayer

*Heavenly Father,
you anointed your Son Jesus Christ
with the Holy Spirit and with power
to bring to us the blessings of your kingdom.
Anoint your Church with the same Holy Spirit,
that we who share in his suffering and victory
may bear witness to the gospel of salvation;
through Jesus Christ, your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.*

Introduction to the sacrament of anointing

The name Jesus means 'God saves', it is through Jesus that God has come to save us, and heal us. Jesus' whole life was aimed at saving people, and there are many accounts of Jesus healing people in the Gospels.

The sacrament that helps unite those who are suffering with Jesus' saving and healing power is the Anointing of the Sick. Through this sacrament we receive comfort and strength in our suffering; we are restored in spirit; and sometimes we even experience the return of physical health. We unite our suffering with Jesus and gain hope and strength from him who suffered on the cross. The sacrament also reminds us that God wants to give comfort to the suffering and wants us to relieve suffering where we can.

Outward sign

The oil that is used in the anointing of the sick is olive oil that has been blessed by the Bishop in Holy Week, through this God takes ordinary oil and makes it holy.

Olive oil is used throughout the Bible, as a symbol of



the abundance of the love of God. To pour oil on someone's head was to wish them happiness and joy. Oil was used as an important part of people's diet, as it nourished them and it was also burnt to be a source of light and heat, as well as being something that was used to clean wounds and for people to use as part of their own washing and cleanliness routine. This is why we use oil to anoint people, that they may receive the love of God, His light, warmth and his nourishment. It is a sign of God's generosity to us.

In the Anointing of the Sick, the priest will trace the sign on the cross on your forehead and the palms of your hands, while he says this prayer: Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord who frees you from your sins save you and raise you up. In this prayer he is asking for the Holy Spirit to help you and strengthen you. It may also be that the priest gently lays his hands on your head and prays with you in silence, this prayer with the laying on of hands is also an ancient part of the Church's ministry.

Inward Grace

Healing and reconciliation with God is a central part of the good news of Jesus Christ. At times we all suffer illness in body, mind or spirit, through the anointing with oil, we are shown God's boundless love for us, and his desire for us to be whole. Through the sacrament of anointing we pray for God's healing in our lives, for things that affect us both physically and spiritually. We are also reassured of God's presence with us, to give us his strength, courage and comfort. It is possible that God may wish to use this sacrament to bring about physical healing, but predominantly he uses it to show his love and presence to us in our most difficult times. This sacrament also helps to show God's reconciling love for us and helps to bring about our spiritual healing as well as physical healing.